

Staff Consultation Forum Meeting

06/10/2021

Present: Anthony Roche (AR), Ian Couper (IC) Dee Levett (DL), Emma Jellis (EJ), Laura Bignell (LB) Maggie Williams (MW) Christina Corr (CC), Vic Godfrey (VG) Debbie Hiscock (DH) Fallon Rumball-Nunan (FRN – notes)

Circulation: Global

1. Apologies

Jo Keshishian, Nicola Viinikka, Andrew Betts

2. Matters Arising

IC to update on PPE box usage at next meeting.

3. NHDC update

Pay Award update: Union have rejected the offer of 1.75% increase (for most grades) and further meetings will be held to reach an agreement along with possible balloting. Pay Award will not be agreed for some time.

Had both Cabinet and Full Council meetings in September which included that the council plan for 2022 onwards has been adopted as has the medium-term financial strategy. This also means the budget process for 2022/23 is underway.

Half day development day- 5th November will be based around the council plan objectives and what that means for shaping our future e.g., training and development needs.

Question: Will the half day development days be continuing into 2022?

Answer: Yes, they will be on going.

Values and behaviours will be refreshed. Four statements will replace the twelve currently in place in the hope they will be more memorable.

Monday 4th October saw the gradual return to the office. IC has not received any feedback yet and welcomes further feedback on individuals' experiences.

Inclusion Group met on Monday 20 September with focus on Ethnicity. Really good discussions and helpful suggestions were offered and the notes for this are available on the relevant intranet page.

4. SCF - Terms of Reference

HR have been reviewing policies and procedures to ensure they are relevant and effective. There is currently a SCF policy, but the view was taken that it would be more appropriate to replace this with Terms of Reference in line with other council committees.

A draft version has been circulated prior to this meeting and comments are welcomed.

The union have also received this draft and accept the proposal.

The employee representation for SCF will also be under review, as having a representative per floor is now out dated. It is suggested that there should be 8 employee representatives in total.

Proposal one:

1 employee representative per service directorate, plus 1 each for Hitchin Town Hall and Buntingford Office.

Proposal two:

Two representatives from both Customer and Regulatory directorates, as well as one representative from Legal, Community, Resources, Commercial (Hitchin Town Hall), Place (Buntingford).

Future of SCF suggestions:

- CC raised a concern regarding staff engagement regarding the employee representative role. It was felt that the proposed training for representatives should address this.
- More interaction and information on various platforms e.g., Insight, Intranet, Message Board.
- Representative from directorate has a slot at Directorate Management Team meeting.
- Does having a regular ICT and Building Services update send the wrong message for the more strategic purpose of SCF?
- No feedback from SCF Minutes Global email, should agenda be sent out as global e-mail prior to meeting to spark debate?
- Seek employee views on SCF future e.g.
 - Issues they would want to see covered
 - Standing items
 - Focus Points
 - How they should be represented

MW to action- Proposed questions for a possible employee survey to be circulated to SCF members before November meeting to discuss.

5. Employee Queries

Question: In light of the increase of electricity costs that have been reported in the news and employees working from home more, is £16 a month still a realistic amount?



Answer: There is the option to claim the difference between what we pay (£16) and the amount that can be paid without tax deduction (£24) = £8, as an adjustment to your tax code.

Question: It was my understanding that under the terms of working from home, should you choose not to work from home you would have the right to a permanent desk. With the desk booking system will this be possible.

Answer: This sounds like an outdated policy. If you would like to book the same desk you can do so for up to 14 days but please remember to cancel if circumstances change.

Question: As there will be no desktops, will temporary members of staff be given a laptop?

Answer: Yes, but IT will require at least 24 hours to configure this individual laptop so managers will need to give adequate notice for this.

Question: Does this apply to agency staff; they are not employees?

Answer: VG to consider and feedback.

Question: What happens with the desk booking system if someone is sick or absent?

Answer: If you don't check into a desk within an hour of your booking, it will cancel the booking and the desk becomes available.

6. IT Update

90% through laptop roll out.

IT have begun collecting data for colleagues at Hitchin Town Hall.

Buntingford laptops have been built and IT will be fitting docking stations week beginning 11th October.

Three of the meeting rooms have the audio-visual equipment, ready for hybrid meetings.

Covid deliveries and petrol shortages have caused delays.

Desk booking system is live. It is simple and easy to use, and you can download a mobile application. It will also run lots of useful background reports.

IT are still configuring system and will have a training day on 7th October.

Question: How do I know if a desk is available or a covid desk?

Answer: On each floor, there is a floor plan of where each desk is. If a desk has a red circle it is a covid desk.

If it has a docking station it is available, if it is an empty desk, it is not available.

Question: When will we no longer have Citrix?

Answer: Between three to six months.

7. Building Services Update

DH welcomed questions or queries for building services.

Question: What has happened to the chairs that have be lent to people for home working?

Answer: There are 50 out on loan but there are ample chairs for the amount of people who will be returning to the office and considering we will no longer be using floor three.

Question: With the desk booking system in mind, could the desks be numbered/labelled?

Answer: Yes

Question: There are enough lockers for everyone to have one each, why has the swimming pool style locker system been introduced?

Answer: With employees mostly home working it is expected that anything in your locker will not be used daily and with the hot desking if your permanent locker is situated on a particular floor and you are sat at another it is more convenient to adopt the swimming style locker approach.

IC to send another announcement about locker usage and explain the transitional period.

Question: When do the lockers need to be cleared out by?

Answer: A message has already been communicated that if you are returning to the office, please think about beginning to clear out your locker. There will be a gradual approach to it.

Question: Can I request a personal locker?

Answer: Yes, requests will be accepted in certain circumstances. An approval process will be put into place.

Question: What time is DCO open?

Answer: 07.30AM – 20.00PM

8. AOB

VG raised that on returning to the office could documents with retention schedules be checked and disposed of accordingly using the blue bins. DH suggested that confidential shredders could be organised.

Chair for next meeting – Dee Levett

Have something to say?

If you have an issue you think should be brought to the attention of the SCF, please contact any SCF representative via phone, email or in person. They will raise your issue at the next meeting. You will not be identified unless you want to be.

Issues relating to property e.g., broken lift, non-flushing toilets, etc. must always be reported to Property Services in the first instance: propertyservices@north-herts.gov.uk

Alternatively, you can send any issues to the SCF inbox - SCF@north-herts.gov.uk

Representatives (and extension):

Emma Jellis #4312 - MSU team based on Floor 4

Christina Corr #4325 - Senior Technical Officer R&B team based on Floor 5

Nicola Viinikka Visitor Services Assistant based at Hitchin Town Hall and Museum

Andrew Betts #4282 - Contracts Officer Waste Management based at Buntingford